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Book Reviews

THE GOLDEN LATIN GOSPELS

In the remarkable collection of manuscripts and books belonging to J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq., of New York, probably none is more notable than the Golden Gospels. Beautifully written on large sheets of purple parchment, in letters of gold, this great codex is one of the chief monuments of mediaeval Latin calligraphy. Mr. Morgan secured it, we are told, from the collection of Mr. Thomas Irwin, of Oswego, N.Y., who in his turn had bought it, about 1890, from Bernard Quaritch, the London dealer. Mr. Quaritch had bought it for £1,500 at the London sale of the Hamilton Manuscripts, in 1889. From this last connection the manuscript was formerly known as the Hamilton Gospels.

Of the origin of the manuscript little that is definite can be said. A coat of arms with dedicatory inscription on the first verso led Quaritch to believe that the manuscript had belonged to Henry VIII, but Berger, the French Vulgate scholar, regarded this inscription as a copy of an earlier one referring to Charlemagne, to whose period he referred the manuscript, finding it a work of the Palatine school, *ca.* 783. Wattenbach held it to have been written in Northumbria, about 670. Mr. H. C. Hoskier has recently made a minute study of the manuscript,¹ and reaches the conclusion that it was written in England, perhaps at Ripon or Wearmouth or Jarrow, and not far from 700 A.D. Mr. Hoskier finds evidence that forty scribes, a truly extraordinary number, worked upon the manuscript, and offers in explanation the theory that the superior, in haste to have the manuscript executed, perhaps as a present for Pope Agatho or Pope John, called in all the monks of the convent and set them to work copying. But it seems highly improbable that there should have been forty monks in any one mediaeval convent skilful enough to be intrusted with the task of writing on purple stained parchment in letters of gold; much less, skilful enough to accomplish such a task. The mere worth of the materials contradicts the

¹ *The Golden Latin Gospels* in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan (formerly known as the "Hamilton Gospels" and sometimes as King Henry the VIIIth's Gospels), now edited for the first time, with Critical Introduction and Notes, and accompanied by four full-page facsimiles. By H. C. HOSKIER. New York: Privately printed, 1910.



THE GOLDEN LATIN GOSPELS
 Luke 18:43-19:14

theory, and surely not every mediaeval monk was a calligrapher. It is true that Mr. Hoskier has seen the manuscript and his readers have not, but one could wish that a manuscript, so extraordinary paleographically, might be reproduced in facsimile, not perhaps in all its purple splendor, but at least in black and white. Paleographers will meantime be reminded that the hand of many a scribe develops as he works on through successive or occasional parts of a long manuscript, on which he may spend months and even years, and the uniformity of print must not be expected of him. It is however clear that a number of hands have worked upon the Golden Gospels, although perhaps not quite so many as Mr. Hoskier finds.

If we may refer the Golden Gospels at least to the eighth century, it ranks among the oldest manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate. Two or three, indeed (Fulda, Friuli, Milan), belongs to the sixth century, and half a dozen to the seventh. But the greatest of Vulgate codices, Amiatinus, probably dates from the beginning of the eighth century, and the Golden Gospels pretty certainly belongs to that general time. There are more elegant initials and decorations in the Book of Kells or the Lindisfarne Gospels, but in dignity of proportions and splendor of materials the Golden Gospels claims a high place in the splendid array of Latin biblical manuscripts. The manuscript preserves the four gospels complete in the Latin Vulgate version. It contains 144 leaves inscribed in double columns of 29-30 lines. The hue of the parchment varies from deep purple to blue, some leaves having probably faded, perhaps from being imperfectly dyed. The leaves measure $14\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$ inches (cm. 36×26).

Abbot Gasquet, in preparing for the Benedictine revision of the Vulgate with which he has been charged, asked Mr. Hoskier to examine the Morgan gospels, and Mr. Hoskier has consequently published an account and collation of the manuscript for Mr. Morgan. Mr. Hoskier's work reveals extraordinary learning and diligence. He has made not an edition of the manuscript, as scholars might have wished, but he has collated it with the Clementine text, and has given some account of the manuscripts which agree in readings with his codex. The printing of the full text, line for line and column for column, would also have shown the manuscript's paragraphing and capitalization, which are sometimes matters of some importance in determining manuscript relationships. The collation seems to show a fairly good type of text. "Our MS," says Mr. Hoskier, "has no very extraordinary text, nor yet an ordinary one" (p. xxvi). It was used, as he believes, though with other manu-

scripts, by the scribes of the Book of Armagh, the Echternach Gospels, and the Gospels of MacRegol (p. cviii); shows remarkable agreements with Vercellensis, the oldest of the Old Latins, and exemplifies a type of text which, Hoskier thinks, can be traced back to Coptic texts older than **N** B or even Origen (p. cxv).

In all this one feels that Mr. Hoskier, in his natural enthusiasm for a notable and beautiful manuscript, has been carried too far. Some things on which he bases a good deal look very much like ordinary mixture, and too much is certainly made of latinization and of some singular and subsingular readings of no great distinctiveness; e.g., the coincidence with Marcion's "ye say" (*dicitis*) in Luke 18:19. Mr. Hoskier's treatment is discursive and casual, rather than orderly, and his judgments on previous workers are not always charitable: "The only editors and collators so far who are accurate are Matthaei, Scrivener, and Tischendorf" (p. vi). We understand Wordsworth and White to be exempted by Mr. Hoskier from this sweeping verdict, but he seems to be unacquainted with Professor Thayer's *Notes on Scrivener's "Plain Introduction"* (1885), with its fifty pages of corrections of Scrivener's catalogue. For philology, he suggests that English "bad" may be derived from Syrian *abad* (ܒܼܼܼ), "perish" (p. lvi). His English should perhaps be left to native British judgment; it seems at least unusual. On the whole, it would have been a worthier exhibition of the testimony of this noble manuscript to print its text in full, column by column, introducing it with a compact and full description of the codex, and following it with a well-digested verdict, freed from distracting minutiae, as to the character of its text.

Some points in Mr. Hoskier's collation call for correction, if the accompanying facsimiles are to be trusted. He might perhaps have indicated upon each of these what leaf of the codex it represents. The four facsimiles, one purple and gold, one blue and gold, and two in black and white, give some idea of the size and splendor of Mr. Morgan's Latin gospels. It is indeed a notable accession to American textual materials. The folio, limited to 200 copies, in which they are printed is a masterpiece of the printer's art, and Mr. Morgan's generosity in presenting copies to leading libraries and universities puts the testimony of his superb manuscript within the reach of a host of scholars.

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